

We held an important hearing on the U.S. government's response to the outbreak of Avian flu in the Foreign Operations Subcommittee last week. While the response effort is more important here at home, our subcommittee's work is focused on the programs the U.S. conducts abroad.

This outbreak is serious. In 1918, the Spanish flu killed over 50 million people. In 1957, the Asian flu killed over one million people. In 1968, the Hong Kong flu killed 700,000 people.

To date, the H5N1 Avian flu has killed 94 people out of the 174 the World Health Organization (WHO) reports contracted the disease. So far, there have been no reported cases of Avian flu here in the Western Hemisphere.

Congress provided an additional \$3.8 billion to upgrade our defenses against H5N1, allowing the United States to pledge more to fight the flu at the January Beijing Avian Flu Conference than any other country. To date, the WHO reports that it has three million doses of Tamiflu to fight an outbreak and are working with the inventors of Tamiflu, Hoffman-La Roche, to dramatically expand supplies.

The United States is now the lead partner in the International Partnership on Avian and Pandemic Influenza. We need to do much more but we have made a good start...

H5N1 Influenza Cases, 2003-2006

